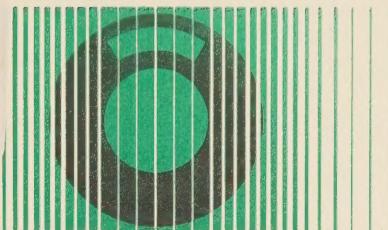




# Machine Readable Archives

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## BULLETIN

### Computerization of the 1871 Ontario Census

Early in 1982, the Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS) approved a proposal by its members Bruce Elliott of Ottawa and Laurena Storey of London that it undertake an index to the 1871 census of Ontario as a project to commemorate the organization's 25th anniversary in 1986. In the autumn of 1982, Bruce Elliott met with Professor John Clarke of the Geography Department of Carleton University and Harold Naugler and David Brown of the Machine Readable Archives Division (MRA) of the Public Archives to discuss making the project a joint endeavour between the Society and the MRA. The result was an agreement whereby the OGS agreed that its members would extract full information from the census (name, sex, age, birthplace, religion, origin and occupation) for every head of family and every individual bearing a surname different from the head (flagging the latter as "strays"), and that the MRA would convert the extracted information into machine-readable form. Each of the twenty-six OGS branches appointed a coordinator to oversee transcription in its own area and received listings and instructions from Bruce Elliott who served as the project's Provincial Coordinator. By the end of 1985, 98.5

per cent of the data extraction had been completed by more than 400 volunteers and computerized by the MRA, and the computerized data for more than half the province had been cross-checked against the microfilms of the original census schedules, again by OGS members.

The results of the project will be made available to the public in three stages. The OGS commenced publication in spring 1986 of a thirty-volume series of nominal indexes to the census on a county basis. The volumes for Halton-Peel and Huron were launched at the Society's annual Seminar in Windsor in May. These county volumes mark the first step toward completion of a province-wide A-Z index that will eventually be available from the Society on microform once verification of the data for the entire province has been completed. These indexes will greatly facilitate genealogical and biographical research by allowing an investigator to locate a given individual quickly, even if the place of residence is unknown. The indexes will therefore be of inestimable value to researchers and to descendants of Ontario families resident in the United States and the Canadian West, for whom the former residence in Ontario of their pioneer ancestors remains a mystery. It will also be of use to researchers in foreign countries searching for em-

igrants, and because of its comprehensiveness it will become the major source for determining the regionalization of surnames in the province. Its main use will probably be in locating migrants. Quite aside from its genealogical value, social scientists studying internal migration and social mobility will find they have gained a useful tool for tracing the later whereabouts of residents who left specific communities in the 1850s and 1860s.

The machine-readable data base created will become available through the Machine Readable Archives Division. When archived, it will be possible for researchers to request copies or extracts from the data base and to undertake statistical cross-tabulations for specialized research projects. For example, researchers will be able to prepare lists of families of African origin in the province, percentage tabulations of Irish or Scottish Catholics and Protestants in specific communities, lists of photographers in a given region, and so forth. Thus the project will result not only in the production of a comprehensive index to the population of Ontario just after Confederation but also in the creation of a computer-manipulable data base that will be of use to scholars and students in various disciplines.

Bruce S. Elliott

### CULDAT

An article in Volume 2 – Number 4 of the *Bulletin* described the origins of the pilot project undertaken to develop a Canadian Union List of Machine Readable Data Files (CULDAT). The work on the development of the online inventory was contracted to the Social Science Computing Laboratory at the University of Western Ontario. The overall purpose was to develop organizational, technical and informational foundations for maintaining and disseminating a computerized inventory. Specific objectives involved: the establishment of a standard for describing MRDF for entry into the data base; the design and implementation of the pilot data base containing a partial inventory; and the definition of the organizational roles and mechanism to effect the routine and cost-effective flow of descriptive information from

data archives and other organizations to the union list beyond the conclusion of the pilot.

The pilot project was carried out over a fourteen month period. In January 1985, a Committee of data archivists and data librarians established a list of elements that were to be used to describe the holdings of the institutions. These elements were taken from those defined in the MARC format for data files. A data dictionary was developed to aid participants in the entry of descriptive information. The Social Science Computing Laboratory was involved in six major activities: the creation of the pilot data base; the set-up of online access with Basis on the Lab's VAX11/785; the set-up of DATAPAC and standard dial-up communications; the conducting of an evaluation of the online system; a survey of potential contributors; and production of a hard copy reference document.

Contributors to the data base were from the university-based archives and libraries and included: Data Library, University of British Columbia; Institute of Social Research, York University; Data Resources Library, University of Western Ontario; Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Manitoba. The MRA also contributed descriptive entries. In all, 753 records were entered into CULDAT. The evaluation of the data base was extended to more participants than those listed above and included both frequent users of online systems as well as infrequent users. Although a number of suggestions have been made on how to improve the online inventory, the general consensus was that the data base was very useful and should be continued.

It is of no surprise that the most crucial component of the data base was the description

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of the data file. A number of difficulties were experienced with the lack of consistent terminology used and the detail of the description itself. A number of problems were encountered and are summarized in the following paragraphs. The resolution of these difficulties has formed the basis of the CULDAT work plan for 1986-87.

The choice of the data elements to be included in CULDAT was based on the fields of the MARC format for data files. A limited number of elements were chosen as it was felt by the Committee that the intention of the data base was to include only sufficient information to identify a unique data file, to aid researchers in selecting files of interest, and to locate archived copies of the file. The resulting CULDAT Data Element Dictionary contained the field names and a brief description. During the pilot project, it was noted that in some cases the data dictionary did not provide sufficient guidance to the archivist or librarian to describe the data files and presumed a knowledge of the MARC format and Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules II. This created some difficulty in mapping out the information received for input into CULDAT. The consequences of a weak data element dictionary are inconsistent presentation of the data that can make the descriptions difficult for the end user to interpret. Weak data descriptions yield inefficient indexes, which, in turn, require the user to anticipate all possible variations of a term in order to find all relevant records in the data base. Specific problems were found in the following data elements.

- (1) *Investigators*—The differentiation between principal investigator and other investigators caused some difficulties for both the cataloguer and the user. The determination of principal investigator for a data file is difficult, if not impossible, at times. The separation of these fields requires searching two fields rather than one for the user wishing to browse the index. The distinction between investigator (personal) and investigator (corporate) was considered essential. The lack of authority control in the corporate investigator field was a problem that could be overcome through the use of Canadiana to control the use and spelling of names.
- (2) *Producer; Generator; Distributor*—A tendency to repeat the same data in these fields was found. This may have been due to the inadequacy of the data dictionary. Abbreviations and acronyms were used. The adoption of an authority file for corporate names would apply to these fields as well.

(3) *File Size; Number of Cases*—Some difficulty was experienced in the data provided in this field. Again, this is due to the lack of guidance in the data dictionary.

(4) *Access Restrictions*—As all institutions have their own access regulations, it was felt that this field should only be completed when the distributing organization has contributed the record.

(5) *Abstract*—Information contained in this field was found at times to repeat information found in other fields. The vocabulary used varied widely, which made control of the field extremely difficult. The types of variables used in a data file is vital information for the prospective user. In order to provide improved access to this field, it would be preferable to separate the abstract from the variable list. Variables could then be indexed as phrases rather than individual words, and the abstract could be left unindexed. Such a change would significantly reduce the indexing overhead and improve the quality of the printed keyword index by using variable names instead of individual words. The online system could continue to index variables as individual words as well as expressions.

(6) *Geographic Coverage*—The pattern adopted by the pilot was as follows: site, city, region, territory, province, state, country (qualifier), continent. The pattern worked well in most cases and ensured that the user interested in data about a particular province could retrieve information on a file that covered only a city in that province. The only records that do not conform to this pattern are physical data where orbital coordinates are submitted.

(7) *Chronological Coverage*—The format of the dates recorded in this field were inconsistent, rendering the retrieval of data ineffective. The data dictionary should prescribe one acceptable format and all dates would be converted. The standard format will provide the possibility of performing systematic retrieval on time periods by scanning the text, even though every unit of time within a range is not actually recorded in the field.

The difficulties that have been encountered will provide valuable information to improve the quality and guidance required for the data dictionary. The second version should improve the consistency of the descriptive entries. The contributions made by the data archives and libraries were extremely useful in building the pilot data base and being able to identify specific needs to improve the data dictionary.

## User Evaluation and Potential Contributors

The original project design called for online testing and evaluation of the pilot CULDAT data base by project participants and preparing a list and contacting potential contributing organizations in order to learn about their holdings and interest in submitting entries into CULDAT in the future. Three important additions were made to enhance the project. The establishment of a DATAPAC Service reduced usage costs and significantly improved convenience to remote users. In addition, the survey of contributors was expanded to include questions on evaluation as they were potential users as well. The third activity was to include three local University of Western Ontario groups (students in the School of Library and Information Science, the University's reference librarians, and social science researchers who use the Lab's support services). These additions increased the use of CULDAT during the pilot phase.

The evaluation of the data base was very favourable and many respondents expected to benefit from the availability of CULDAT in the future. Considerable information from prospective contributors and users was acquired. This information and experience provides a sound foundation for the design and planning of the next stages in the development of CULDAT. The MRA would like to thank all of those who contributed their time through the preparation of descriptions of their holdings, the testings and evaluation of the data base, and their response as potential contributors.

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This article, by Sue Gavrel, is an abridged version of the Final Report, "Pilot Project for the Development of a Canadian Union List of Machine Readable Data Files (CULDAT)," prepared by Edward H. Hanis, Social Science Computing Laboratory, University of Western Ontario for the Machine Readable Archives, Public Archives of Canada.

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Anyone wishing information about the *Bulletin* may write to: Public Archives of Canada, Machine Readable Archives Division, Documentation and Public Service Section, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N3, or phone (613) 993-7772.

Evaluation par les utilisateurs et participants éventuels

Traduction d'une version abrégée par Sue Gavril du rapport final «Pilot Project for the Development of a Canadian Union List of Machine-readable Data Files (CLUDAT)», du laboratoire de l'Université Western Ontario pour les Archives ordinaires des Archives publiques du Canada.

Tour dernière des renseignements au sujet du Bulletin, il suffit d'entrer à l'adresse suivante : Archives publiques du Canada, Division des archives administratives, 3955, rue Wellington, Ottawa (Ontario), K1A 0N3, ou de téléphoner au (613) 993-7772.

La base de données a été alimentée par des bibliothèques et des établissements d'archives qui ont fourni des informations sur les publications et les auteurs. Des données supplémentaires ont été fournies par des partenaires du programme, y compris l'Université de Colombie-Britannique, l'Institut de Recherche en Sciences Sociales à Montréal, la Bibliothèque de l'Université de York, la Data Resources Library de l'Université de New York, et l'Institut de Recherche en Sciences Sociales à Montréal. Des données supplémentaires ont été fournies par le Gouvernement du Canada et les provinces canadiennes. La base de données a également été enrichie par des contributions de chercheurs et d'organisations extérieures.

coordonnateur provincial. Au 31 décembre dernier, 98,5 % des données avaient été extraites par la DAO, et plus de 400 bénovoles plus informations avaient été collectées par les membres de LOGS qui les avaient compilées dans un bordereau du recensement original. Les résultats du projet seront disponibles en octobre prochain.

LOGS a commencé à publier une série d'index nominaux étapes. Au cours du printemps, LOGS a sorti les comtés de Hamilton-Peel et de Huron ont été présentés lors du colloque annuel de la Société canadienne des géographes qui s'est tenu à Wimdsor en mai. Ces deux volumes sont les premiers d'un index alpha-numérique de tous les comtés de la province que LOGS produira sur microfiche dès que toutes les données auront été vérifiées. Cet index facilitera considérablement les recherches géo-économiques et démographiques dans le Canada. Par ailleurs, LOGS a commencé à travailler avec les chercheurs dans les pays étrangers pour élaborer une carte mondiale pour les chercheurs et les résidents de la province de Québec.

Automatisation des données du recensement de 1871 de l'Ontario

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